

Goa and Karnataka: Forts, Temples and Churches

<https://www.kudutravel.com/tours/goa-karnataka-walking-tour>

20 January – 3 February 2021

We start our tour in Goa, a small state on India's western coast, known not just for its sandy beaches along the Arabian Sea coastline, but also for its remarkable heritage of military forts, churches and colonial mansions. For centuries, from the beginning of 16th century until 1961, Goa was a Portuguese territory and the cultural, architectural and culinary influences of this era make this sun-blessed statelet unique within India and, indeed, the world.

After a brief sojourn beside the golden beaches of Goa, we move on to the neighbouring state of Karnataka, crossing the Western Ghats range to reach the Deccan Plateau, with its fertile fields filled with maize; rice; coconut palms and peanuts. We explore this area, known as the Cradle of Indian civilisation, covering Badami, ruled by the Chalukyas; the seat of the Vijayanagar Empire, Hampi, and further south, the Hoysala Dynasty temples in Belur and Halebid. The architecture of these monuments and the skill displayed in the fine sculpting of the native stones are truly awe-inspiring.

Our itinerary includes undemanding walks to observe birds, coffee and spice plantations and waterfalls. In the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary, we take a boat trip and a jeep safari, during which we look for river terns; kingfishers; ospreys; deer of various species and elephants. Perhaps, if we are fortunate, we may spot a tiger. Throughout the tour, we are accompanied by an expert naturalist guide who identifies the flora and fauna as we traverse the land in comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles.

Guests' comments on this trip:

'We have had a very happy and interesting journey to Karnataka thanks to you all. Clearly you go to a lot of trouble to sort out the itinerary, the guides and drivers and the hotels. What a very interesting itinerary you put together for us. A good mixture of birding and buildings.'

Itinerary

DAY 1

L, D included

We meet at Goa airport in the morning and have an hour's road transfer to our luxury beach-side hotel. In the afternoon, we take a short drive to the Bardez Peninsula, at the confluence of the Mandovi river and the Arabian Sea, to visit Fort Aguada, built in 1612 using laterite, the red stone characteristic of many buildings in Goa.

DAY 2

B, L, D included

Panjim is Goa's capital on the southern bank of the Mandovi river. One of the first places occupied by the Portuguese in the 16th century, it served as the seat of Portuguese India over the centuries, with a brief period of British occupation. Our walking tour takes us from the picturesque historic quarter of Fontainhas past the Immaculate Conception Church, originally built around 1540. The afternoon provides free time to relax in the hotel grounds or on the beach.

DAY 3

B, L, D included

A short drive inland brings us to Old Goa, with its UNESCO listed late 16th century Basilica Bom

Jesus; the 17th century Se Cathedral, considered one of Asia's largest churches, and the atmospheric ruins of the early 17th century Augustinian convent. After a simple lunch, we drive (3 hrs) further inland to Belgaum in Karnataka, where we spend a night in a modern 4-star hotel.

DAY 4

B, L, D included

The history of the Belgaum Fort goes back to the early 13th century, when it was built for the ruling dynasty. The fort, surrounded by its original moat, contains historic Jain and Hindu temples and two 16th century mosques. We spend the morning walking through the extensive grounds. After lunch, we set off for our drive to Badami (3 hrs), a thriving small town, scenically set by a lake at the bottom of two sandstone hills. Our base for the next 3 nights is a traditional hotel, with a swimming pool set in its lush garden.

DAY 5

B, L, D included

We spend the day in Badami, the capital of the Early Chalukya Dynasty, exploring its sites on foot. Four cave-temples were carved into a sandstone cliff during the 6th and 7th century and decorated with statues of principal Hindu deities such as Shiva, Vishnu, Ganesha, Parvati or Lakshmi. A path leads us around the lake, where we visit early free-standing temples built in the 7th century. In the afternoon, we drive to the walled Mahakuta Temple complex, an important pilgrimage site, dedicated to Shiva and noted for fine carvings of this deity's half-male, half-female form. An optional 5 km walk through the countryside will bring us back to Badami.

DAY 6

B, L, D included

An hour's scenic drive takes us to Aihole, an open-air museum-village, where over a hundred Hindu, Jain and Buddhist temples from 6th – 12th centuries are scattered amongst recently built homes. Aihole comprises an early workshop of temple architecture styles. To orientate ourselves, we begin at the horseshoe shaped Durga Temple. Later, we walk through the village taking in, amongst others, the hilltop Meguti Jain temple or the 6th century rock cut temple, Ravanaphadi. The nearby UNESCO World Heritage Site of Pattadakal was a holy place for the Early Chalukyas: coronation ceremonies took place here. As we wander through this relatively compact area with its ten temples, we learn how temple art developed in the 7th and 8th centuries.

DAY 7

B, L, D included

Following a 3-hour drive south east, we arrive in Hampi, the former capital of the Vijayanagar Empire on the Tungabhadra River. Hampi flourished from the mid-14th century for around two hundred years, during which it became one of the biggest and richest cities in the world as the religious and commercial centre of the Empire. It was destroyed and abandoned following the king's capture and death in 1565. This afternoon, we explore the Royal Enclosure with regal halls, elephant stables and water reservoirs. Our hotel for 2 nights is a delightful 4-star hotel featuring spacious rooms, a swimming pool and extensive grounds, including a kitchen garden to supply its restaurant.

DAY 8

B, L, D included

We spend the morning discovering different areas of Hampi's extensive archaeological site, set in a remarkable landscape formed by granite boulders. We walk along a river path taking in many temples and shrines and past the 750 metre long stone bazaar, where goods from precious gems to elephants were traded. In the heart of the Sacred Complex is the Virupaksha Temple, which predates the Vijayanagar Empire and remains an active site of worship.

DAY 9

B, L, D included

A day's drive (6 hrs) to the hill station town of Chikmagalur in southern Karnataka is punctuated half way by lunch and a walk around the impressive 18th century Chitradurga Fort, a bastion straddling several hills that British troops feared to conquer. We settle into our 4-star hotel (3 nights) centred around a colonial era building, set in well-kept ornamental gardens.

DAY 10

B, L, D included

Legend has it that a pilgrim known as Baba Budan smuggled 7 seeds of coffee into India as he returned from the Hajj and sowed them in his garden in the hills near Chikmagalur. That was four centuries ago and today, Chikmagalur is one of India's main coffee producing areas. Most of the production comes from small growers with plantations of less than 10 acres, normally inter-cropped with spices such as pepper, cardamom and clove. Our 5-km walk follows a little used road amongst some of these coffee plantations.

DAY 11

B, L, D included

Chronologically, the Hoysala Empire fits between the Chalukya and Vijayanagar Empires. Our first stop today, around 30 km from our hotel, is the 12th century Chennakesava Temple in Belur, the Hoysalas' first capital. The construction of the Hoysaleswara Temple, in nearby Halebid, commenced a few years later in 1121, when Halebid took over as the capital of the Empire. The Hoysala temple architecture is noted for its fine sculptural detail, thanks to the use of steatite (soapstone), which enabled craftsmen to create lace-like carvings with precision and complexity.

DAY 12

B, L, D included

Following a leisurely start, we have a 2-hours' drive to our modest wilderness lodge, with spacious rooms in individual cottages, in the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary. We first drive through an upland area with coffee plantations lining the road and the peaks of the Baba Budan Giri range to our left, before we descend to the fertile plain below. During our late afternoon jeep game drive (2.5 hrs), we look for elephant, sambar, spotted and barking deer, wild boar and one of the reserve's estimated 33 tigers.

DAY 13

B, L, D included

The pre-breakfast 2-hour boat safari gives us opportunities to observe and learn about the river terns, who arrive in large numbers at the Bhadra Reservoir to nest before the monsoon descends in April. Other bird species include osprey, short-toed snake eagle, little cormorant, spot bill duck, black-headed ibis, white-breasted kingfisher and Malabar pied hornbill. We pause at Jog Falls, created by the river Sharavathi dropping 253 m to form India's second highest waterfall, before continuing to our overnight stop on the coast in Gokarna. We stay in cottages set in a garden.

DAY 14

B, L, D included

Gokarna is amongst the most important Hindu pilgrimage centres. As we walk along the main street towards the beach, we see many pilgrims heading for the main Mahabaleshwar Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, having cleansed themselves in the sea. By late morning, we are on our way north, passing the naval base in Karwar and across the border into Goa, where we stop for lunch on the beach. Our final resting place is a stylish 5-star hotel with excellent service.

DAY 15

B included

A 30-minute airport transfer concludes your holiday.

Activity Level

Relaxed

Mainly short walks (1.5 – 3 hours) most days, with some longer walks offered. Tough trainers or good walking shoes (with a gripping sole) are appropriate.

Temperatures

During January, temperatures are likely to range from 20°C to 30°C during the day. It is considerably cooler on the Deccan Plateau. This is the dry season in the areas we are visiting, but rain showers are always possible in the tropics.

Accommodation

- 2 nights in Candolim, in a luxury hotel on the coast, where your room will be guaranteed for early morning check in the night before
- 1 night in Belgaum, in a modern 4-star hotel
- 3 nights in Badami, a traditional simple hotel, with a swimming pool set in a lush garden
- 2 nights near Hampi, in a delightful 4-star hotel featuring spacious rooms, a swimming pool and extensive grounds with a kitchen garden supplying the restaurant
- 3 nights near Chikmagalur, in a 4-star hotel centred around a colonial era building and set in well-kept ornamental gardens
- 1 night near the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary, in a modest wilderness lodge, with spacious rooms in individual cottages
- 1 night in Gokarna, in cottages set in a garden
- 1 night in South Goa, in a stylish 5-star hotel with excellent service

Trip Price, per person sharing:

£4,430.75 until 19th April 2020

£4,550.50 until 19th July 2020

£4,670.25 until 19th October 2020

£4,790 after 19th October 2020

<https://www.kudutravel.com/faq#discounts>

£980 double for single room supplement

£800 deposit per person

Please note that the single use room supplement is imposed by the hotels and not by Kudu Travel. If you are willing to share, but no other suitable guest books on the trip, we regret that the supplement will be payable.

Price Includes

- Accommodation for Days 1 through 15, on a twin shared basis
- Meals with local beer at lunch and dinner (wine occasionally, when available) as listed (Please note that some restaurants in India are strictly vegetarian and alcohol-free – bring some duty free!)
- Land transportation in private air-conditioned vehicles, except during free periods
- Jeep and boat safari, as described
- Entrance, National Park and sightseeing fees, except during free periods
- Services of an expert local naturalist guide and a driver throughout, plus our Kudu Travel tour leader
- Services of specialist trackers and guides in National Parks and reserves
- Tips for porters, restaurant and hotel staff and driver (appreciation for your tour leaders is at your discretion)

Price does not Include

- Flights to and from Goa International Airport
- Trip cancellation, medical or other insurance
- Immunisations, prescriptions or other medical requirements
- Passport, visa and health documentation
- Personal expenses (laundry, alcohol besides beer & occasional wine with group meals, free time activities, etc.)
- Meals noted as excepted in the daily notation;
- Transport and transfer of excess baggage; and
- Indian departure tax, if any.

VALUE FOR MONEY - SO MUCH IS INCLUDED

On Kudu trips, you will only need money for postcards, presents to take home, the odd G & T or an irresistible ice cream. Festival and opera tickets, museum and gallery entrances, National Park fees, all meals (with a very few exceptions specified in individual itineraries), wine with lunch and dinner, access to specialist books carried by the guides, gratuities for porters and hotel and restaurant staff, boat rides, train trips, internal flights, wine tastings, 4WDs with drivers, the services of skilled local guides and trackers etc. are ALL INCLUDED in the cost of your holiday. We are confident that, like previous very satisfied guests, you will discover that our tours give you excellent value for money.

Specialist Guides

Benny Kurian is considered one of India's leading naturalists, with decades of experience exploring the Western Ghats. Amongst his achievements, he has documented sightings of two mammal species thought to have become extinct in the 19th century. This trip is led jointly by Benny and **Ruth Hackney**, a Cambridge graduate in Oriental Studies.

Off the beaten track

Please be aware that electricity and water supplies may occasionally be erratic, travel arrangements can be disrupted and standards of driving and vehicle maintenance etc. are not set by the British Ministry of Transport. Kudu Travel will endeavour to do everything possible to ensure a smooth-running tour, but please be ready with your sense of humour and tolerance when travelling in the tropics.

Visa and Health Requirements

All visitors require a visa for entry to India and the simplest way to obtain a tourist visa is to apply online on <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/>. The costs start from £25.

A Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is not required when arriving from Europe or the USA. Immunisation/boosters against Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid and Polio are recommended. Please **consult your doctor** in good time about this (**at least 6 weeks before departure**) and the latest situation on malaria prophylaxis and anything else they may recommend. You may also wish to check the advice given to travellers by the Department of Health (<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/healthcare-when-travelling-abroad/>) and the FCO (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>).

Insurance

It is essential, and a condition of booking, that you protect yourself with a suitable travel insurance policy as soon as you book this trip. We can arrange comprehensive cover for UK residents. For further details, please see the Kudu website or brochure or ask our office.

Size of Party

This trip will run with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 14 guests.